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Civic education and conflict resolutions: A case of selected secondary schools in Kitwe district of Copperbelt Province, Zambia

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Abstract

"Civic Education" means all the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities. The study was guided by conceptual framework emanating from three strands of Civic Education which are; Civic knowledge, Civic Skills and Civic Values. Related literature on conflict management styles as well as concept and goals of Civic Education were consulted. The study demonstrated the importance of teaching Civic Education as a tool for conflict resolution in the community through the provision of knowledge on: human rights, imparting of civic skills for effective participation, for conflict resolution and for effective leadership. Hence, the study was conducted to ascertain how Civic Education can be used in conflict resolutions especially at community level in selected secondary schools in Kitwe district of Copperbelt province in Zambia. The study involved both the qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive research design that sampled the head teachers, teachers of civic education, pupils of civic education and selected members of the community. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews and questionnaires. Frequency tables, graphs, figures and pie-charts were used to analyze the qualitative data whereas quantitative data were analyzed by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16). The findings indicated that the teaching of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia enables learners to be critical thinkers and also helping in curbing social challenges. Strategies used in the teaching of Civic Education in secondary school which includes; affiliation to subject association, pupils' administrative boards, invitation of professionals, conducting of education tours to public institutions and also through community engagement were discussed as presented by respondents. Learner centered methods which includes; discussion, debate, research and explanation were also discussed.

Keywords: Academic Freedom; Civic Education; Community Engagement; Conflict Resolution; Teaching/Learning Materials and Teaching Methods

1. Introduction

Conflict refers to misunderstanding or disagreements between two or more people. Whenever two individuals opine in different ways, a conflict arises. No two individuals can think alike and there is definitely a difference in their thought process as well as their understanding. Hence, disagreements among individuals lead to conflicts and fights. Conflict is inevitable and occurs from place to place and individual to others due to variety of interest. From the antiquity to contemporary times, competition and conflict are regarded as inherent phenomena in both nature and society. Conflict occurs ordinarily due to human interaction in the society. Once there is the cause for inter-group relations, conflict becomes inevitable and peace must be given a chance (Owusu-Mensah, 2007). Hence, conflict could be seen as a natural phenomenon which must occur among human beings. Latent or violent social confrontations have long been considered as the premium mobile for social changes and transformations. Such changes at times may not be accepted by the citizens of that particular community resulting to inert or violent conflict.

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Civic Education can also be defined as the provision of information and learning experiences to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic processes. The main goal of civic education can be considered as the formation of civil qualities on the basis of new knowledge, skills and values that help individuals to solve emerging problems, adapt to changing socio-economic and political conditions, represent and protect their rights and interests, respecting the interests and rights of others (Vasiljevic, 2009). The purpose of each state civic program should be the creation of an effective system of ethical and legal education that would contribute to: (1) the formation and development of humanistic personal orientations, (2) the formation of legal and political culture among schoolchildren and (3) the development of their democratic way of thinking and the acquisition of a complex ethical, legal and political knowledge, skills and abilities and the experience that young people need to integrate into a democratic society, for their active participation in the social life of the country and the protection of the rule of law.

(Ibid, 2009) adds that a true civics education has three interrelated components, virtue, knowledge and skills. Civic virtues are the traits of character necessary for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance and citizenship. Examples of civic virtues are respect for the worth and dignity of each person, civility, integrity, self-discipline, tolerance and compassion. Civic knowledge includes principles of democratic theory, operations of democratic governance, and behaviors of democratic citizenship. In particular, it involves concepts and data about democracy in the learner's country and comparisons with other countries. Civic skills are the cognitive operations that enable the learner to understand, explain, compare, and evaluate principles and practices of government and citizenship. There also are participatory skills that involve actions by citizens to monitor and influence public policies and the resolution of public issues. Together, the cognitive and participatory skills involve the citizen's use of knowledge to think and act competently in response to the ongoing challenges of democratic governance and citizenship. As a school subject of study, Civic Education is supposed to provide young citizens with conceptions of citizenship, its rights and duties, governance and participation opportunities in a broad sense Muleya, 2019). It infers on making learners critical thinkers and active participants in democratic activities of their community. Civic education is the continual and systematic provision of information and learning experiences to all citizens for their effective participation in democratic life. The purpose of civic education is to have an informed citizenry that actively participates in governance affairs of the society on the basis of enhanced knowledge, understanding and ownership. Civic education imparts information and creates awareness of civic morals and values, rights and responsibilities and on how these are exercised and accessed by all citizens within society including disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Civic education is often used in combination with other participatory governance tools. It can take different forms from classroom-based learning, informal training, experiential learning, to mass media campaigns. When done effectively, it leads to more effective and inclusive participation by all citizens in socio-economic, political and governance processes affecting their lives.

Every education program is developed on its unique goals. This is same with Civic Education in which its general rationale is to impart civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions or values to a citizen. This general overview was noted by Kaumba (2015) who pinpoint, that Civic Education enables citizenship in the sense of providing people with the knowledge, skills and values required for exercising their rights and fulfilling their responsibilities. These strands embedded in Civic Education are essential as they empower citizens to become active participants in their community. The study done by Thakore (2013) noted the primary aim of Civic Education as to produce informed citizens. The course is intended at producing citizens who becomes the subject of knowledge and skills in their community pertaining governance institutions. Ibid (2015) presents similar findings that the traditional Civic Education classes have a strong emphasis on knowledge, focusing on Constitution, government and political institutions, as well as national history. Kamp (2011) acknowledges that Civic Education as a course of study equip the citizens with the required awareness, knowledge and skills to be conscious and active political participants in the democratic society. Citizens should have knowledge on the organization of their state for them to actively participate at any level of community organization. Crick (2000) infers that, knowledgeable citizens are aware of the complexities of the economic, ethical and social issues and dilemmas that confront people and have some knowledge of political, social, economic and cultural ideas and phenomena. The task is a cognitive one, of extending children's knowledge and understanding of political ideas, institutions and issues.

Conflict is inevitable and occurs from place to place and individual to individual due to variety of opposite interests. From the antiquity to contemporary times, competitions and conflicts are regarded as inherent phenomena in both nature and society. Conflict occurs ordinarily due to human interaction in the society. Once there is the cause for inter-group relations, conflict becomes inevitable and peace must be given a chance (Crowe, 2009). According to Laura (2010), latent or violent social confrontations have long been considered as the premium mobile for social changes and transformations. Such changes at times may not be accepted by the citizens of that particular community resulting to inert or violent conflict. It starts in an individual's minds and generate to entire community. Conflict is a complex phrase which can be defined differently according to scholars' field of orientation. Ardirt Memeti (2013) defines conflict as the

pursuit of incompatibility of goals by individuals or groups as a result of the inability of social structure to allocate values objectively. It is a disagreement that generates from distributive injustice. Conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (Thakore, 2013). Since people's culture is dynamic, conflict is caused when there is clash in cultural practice among the people living in the same geographical settings. Halstead J. M and Pike (2006) calls this kind of conflict as 'social conflict'. Social conflict is said to be a struggle over values or claims to status power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. It is a great creative and ever-present force that leads to social change. This kind of conflict endangers economic development and overall standard of living. Thus why Ibid (2013) observed that, conflict exists when two people wish to carry out acts that are mutually inconsistent. They will want to do the same thing or do different things that are incompatible. In the pursuit of upholding one's culture, one may cause conflict as his or her practices may not be consistent with other members of the same heterogeneity society.

There are a number of factors motivating occupancy of conflict in the community. Among other causes includes; political repression to multiparty participation, impunity, ethnicity and polarization, the erosion of exiting mechanisms for conflict management, long standing land and identity disputes, administrative and boundary units related to resources and ineffective mechanisms for political and social dialogue. Further, Owusu-Mensah (2007) provide a list of some of the common causes of conflict in the West Africa sub-region which are; struggle for economic resources, boundary disputes, environmental degradation, and struggle for political power between or among ethnic groups, religious sentiments. These causes though predominately in the Western part of Africa, they can also be found in other regions of the globe. When conflict is noticed in the community, a variety of strategies to slake it are employed. Strategies to conflict resolution which can also be referred to as response to conflict takes the initial stage before development of conflict to direct violence. Crowe (2009) describe response systems to conflict as "timely and appropriate prevention initiatives, usually undertaken during dormant stages of perceived potential violent conflict". The failure by parties to resolve conflict during its escalation stages results to employing of conflict resolution strategies. Conflict resolution is not only important, the method employed in the settlement matters is more in the sense that, it satisfies the parties to the conflict. Ibid (2009) further provides the list of common strategies used in conflict resolution. These includes; compromise, avoidance, flight, forcing, collaboration, fight, accommodating and flow pattern. However, these responses to conflict are employed when there if detection for the presence of conflict in the community.

In addition to the common methods used in resolving conflict in the community, this study sought to investigate how the teaching of Civic Education can also be employed as a tool for conflict resolution in the community. This is because there is a profound relationship between education and conflict, hence education has a critical role in building peace. According to Debbie and Stacey (2016), says Civic Education by its very nature contributes to shaping and transforming society and therefore plays a key role in peace-building. Civic Education is embedded with its goals which includes, enlightening citizens with the rights, empowering citizens for effective participation and provision of skills which makes learners critical thinkers in issues that affect them in the community. Since its reintroduction in 2003 under pilot project in three provinces of Zambia (Lusaka, Central and Northern Province), Civic Education has helped in empowering citizens in so many ways (MOESVTEE, 2013). The founder members sought to assist the development of democratic process in Zambia as well as promoting Justice in the community. The teaching of Civic Education in Zambian secondary schools was inevitable for the production of citizens who would contribute to development of the society in line with the dictates of democracy (Muleya, 2015).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The conflict is a condition which occurs as a result of irreconcilable interests. Irreconcilable interests can be found in all areas of life, politics, family, school, sports field etc. Conflict behavior involves activities that one side has taken in order to counter the other side. It may be different in intensity in different forms, such as arguing, offending, hitting, etc. The teaching of Civic Education in schools is based on imparting civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions to the learners. Vasiljevic (2009) argued that, Civic Education classes have a strong emphasis on knowledge, focusing on constitution, government and political institutions, as well as national history. Kamp (2011) sees Civic Education as a course of study which helps learners be active, informed and critical citizenry by providing them with relevant skills. Additionally, Halstead and Pike (2006) identify some of the essential values to a civilized society as; human rights, tolerance, respect for persons or anti-racism which students need to learn in Civic Education. With this information, the teaching of Civic Education in expected to promote a peace and discourage coercion as a method to settle dispute in the community. However, it would appear as though Civic Education has seemingly not produced the desired results especially where conflict resolution is concerned. It was from this background that this study focused on investigating the impact of civic education in conflict resolutions in selected secondary schools in Kitwe district of Copperbelt province in Zambia.

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate into civic education and how it impacts on conflict resolutions at the selected secondary schools in Kitwe district of Copperbelt province in Zambia.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Examine the role of Civic Education in conflict resolutions at the selected secondary schools in Kitwe district of Copperbelt province in Zambia.
- Investigate challenges faced in the teaching/learning of Civic Education as a tool for conflict resolutions at the selected secondary schools in Kitwe district of Copperbelt province in Zambia.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the three strands civic responsibilities and duties towards each other and community as a whole. The teaching of Civic Education provide skills needed for critical thinking, analyzed issues and formulate opinions. The teaching of Civic Educational so helps learners to change their mind-set towards involvement in conflict and cherish peace. Therefore, this conceptual framework, based on learners' acquisition of civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions or values is assumed to integrate the interaction between teaching of Civic Education and conflict resolution in the community. The study of Civic Education which is also known as citizenship education in other areas of society has come with various explanations on what it is constituted of. Scholars from different parts of the global have different understanding on what Civic Education is. Civic Education can also be called, Citizenship Education and Ethics, Civic Culture, Civic, legal and social education (Crick, 2000). The differences in names does not however means the subject have unique content from one society to another, instead it is all based at producing a citizen who will understand the fabrics of his or her society. In this study, few samples among the existing definitions on what Civic Education are explored. This work however, is not set to dive into defining or why many explanations on what constitute this field of study exist, instead it is set to investigate the teaching of Civic Education in Zambian's senior secondary schools and how it serves as a tool for conflict resolution in the society. Hence, other scholars will find it convenient to look into other areas as such in future. (Vasiljevi, 2009) views Civic Education as a subject that deals with knowledge about government structures and processes. The study of Civic Education helps to explain how government machineries ought to operate in relation to the governed and the governor. Civic Education according to Muleya (2019) unveils governance of a sector, and the way in which politics and institutions interact within that sector. Students become aware of weaknesses that might occur if one of the arms of government is incapacitated or try to intrude in the operation of other branches. Civic Education can facilitate peace in the community as government officials (from legislature, executive and judiciary) will operate within their perimeters and the governed will provide necessary checks and balances while those responsible will bow to accountability principles.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate how civic education play a very important role in conflict resolutions in the Zambian communities. Therefore, the main focus of this study was to find ways of improving the teaching of civic education in imparting good morals and values in the society. It is hoped that the study findings would provide information on how civic education impact knowledge and values among pupils as well as the community at large. The findings may also help the community to use civic disposition as one way for resolving conflict. Further, this study may be an eye opener to policy makers to make policies that would promote peace in the community through the promotion of the teaching of Civic Education all secondary schools.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions.

2.2. Research Site

The research was conducted in Kitwe district of Copperbelt province in Zambia from which respondents were also sampled.

2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of head teachers, teachers of civic education, pupils of civic education and community members from the selected schools. The target population was 1200. The sample size involved a total of 120 respondents which included the four (4) head teachers, one from each selected school. Sixteen (16) civic education teachers, four from each selected school. Eighty (80) pupils of civic education, twenty from each selected school and twenty (20) community members. The study engaged both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants. Simple random sampling was used on the teachers, pupils and members of the community, this is because there were too many to participate, hence simple random selection was preferred. On the other hand, purposive sampling was used on the head teachers.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively as the semi-structured interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. The thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorizing themes from the semi-structured interview schedules. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires were analyzed manually by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16) to come up with frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

2.5. Ethical Issues

The researcher upheld research ethical considerations for example voluntary participation of the respondents, confidentiality, honesty, right of privacy and so forth in a manner that the research was not disrupt the daily routine of the schools under research and education offices. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. The researcher briefed and debriefed the participants at the beginning and at the end of the study and assured the participants that the data to be collected was purely for academic purposes only. The researcher also assured participants that identification symbols used like names were not recorded in the questionnaires to ensure anonymity of the respondents. The researcher also ensured that the respondents were protected from any possible harm that might have risen from the study. Additionally, the researcher got permission from DEBS office Kitwe district to carry out this study.

## 3. Results and discussion

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

3.1. Role of Civic Education in Conflict Resolutions

Table 1 Role of Civic Education in Conflict Resolutions

Respondents	Role of Civic Education in Conflict Resolutions	Percentage
Head teachers	Respect for human rights	25%
Teachers	Effective participation	30%
Pupils	Critical thinking	30%
Community members	Cultural diversity	15%
Total		100%

Source: Author, 2023
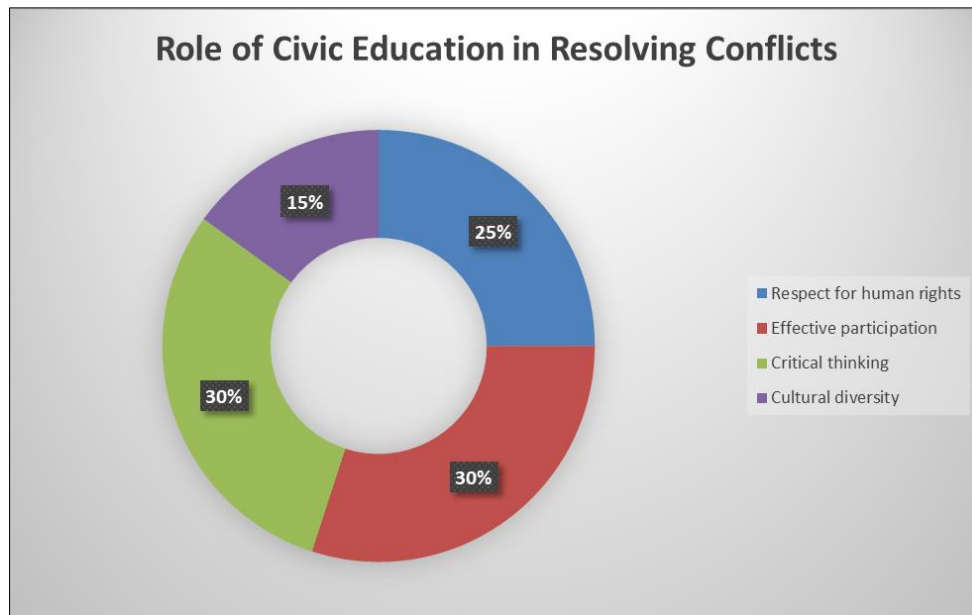
Source: Author, 2023

Figure 1 Role of Civic Education in Conflict Resolutions

(30%) representing head teachers stated that Civic Education promotes respect for human rights, in the sense that it helps in enlightening citizens of their own rights and those of others. If people are ignorant of their rights and those of others, conflict in the community would continue to be recorded. Therefore, the teaching of Civic Education has tremendous benefits of making those who are aware of human rights to have moral control on the rights of their fellows as they enjoy their own right. The study findings agree with Halstead and Pike (2006) who explained essential values embedded in Civic Education as: human rights, tolerance, respect for persons or anti-racism which students learn in schools. Through the teaching of Civic Education in secondary schools, students are enlightened of their own fundamental rights and freedoms. Once citizens understand these claims which the state provides, they will pledge to respect others" rights as they exercise theirs. This will reduce issues of conflict in communities as every person understands his or her boundaries with regards to human rights enjoyment. In a pluralist state, a civically minded person is aware of values which govern the community.

(30%) representing teachers of civic education also stated that civic education promotes effective participation among pupils. It is true that the subject is rich in political content, for example, most of the countries including. Therefore, Civic Education as a course of study which if taken seriously, can help community produce graduates who will have self-conscious. Various views collected from respondents suggest the benefits found in Civic Education as enhancement of effective participation in decision making. Learners who have studied Civic Education have unique abilities to participate in the decision making in democratic communities. Vasiljevi (2009) wrote that Civic Education aims at imparting competences that enables citizens to effectively participate in democratic actions of the community. Leaning about democratic actions agrees with the current study findings where Civic Education helps learners know about democratic practices in communities. These democratic ideals include among others; citizen free participation, existence of political parties, political tolerance, and respect for human rights.

(25%) representing pupils of civic education narrated that teachers teach Civic Education in order to produce well-informed citizens. One of pupils said that through civic education, they are able to argue out and make informed decision especially during democratic campaigns where different candidates approaches one society to sale for them manifestoes. Citizens provide accountability to their leadership because they are empowered by Civic Education. The findings of the current study confirm with Ministry of Education (1996) document which outlines the provision of education which helps learners to develop desirable intellectual skills and qualities such as reflective reasoning and logical thinking. Civic Education empower citizens with skills for analyzing public policy development and actions taken by policy implementers in executing such strategies. Citizens provides accountability to political leadership so that they are transparent in the use of public resources. Because of Civic Education, citizens do not take a freelance status in governance matters, they are able to make informed decisions during democratic campaigns for those seeking public office.

(15%) representing community members pointed out that the teaching of Civic Education helps in promoting cultural diversity in communities. The views by community members reviewed that Civic Education exist to provide the understanding and appreciation of indigenous culture, while welcoming embracing global culture too. This approach denounces discrimination of other cultures which may lead to racism, xenophobia, genocide and many other anti-social behaviours.

It was also demonstrated through this study that Civic Education in secondary schools enables citizens to be aware of cultural diversity of their community. Similarly, Debbie and Stacey (2016) emphasized the importance of Civic Education in understanding of one's culture. Civic Education in schools enables one to know his or her cultural rights and identity. The understanding of cultural rights and identity promote core existence as citizens cherish their own cultures in respect of others" in a heterogeneous community. Civic Education provides knowledge and skills on how multicultural communities like Zambia should live in peace. Learners will understand their cultural practices and be able to appreciate those of other ethnic groups in the same community.

3.2. Challenges Faced in the Teaching/Learning of Civic Education as a Tool for Conflict Resolutions

Table 2 Challenges Faced in the Teaching/Learning of CVE

Respondents	Challenges Faced in the Teaching/Learning of CVE	Percentage
Head teachers	Curriculum formation	15%
Teachers	Civic Education not compulsory	35%
Pupils	Reliable literature	30%
Community members	Understanding different learning styles	20%
Total		100%

Source: Author, 2023
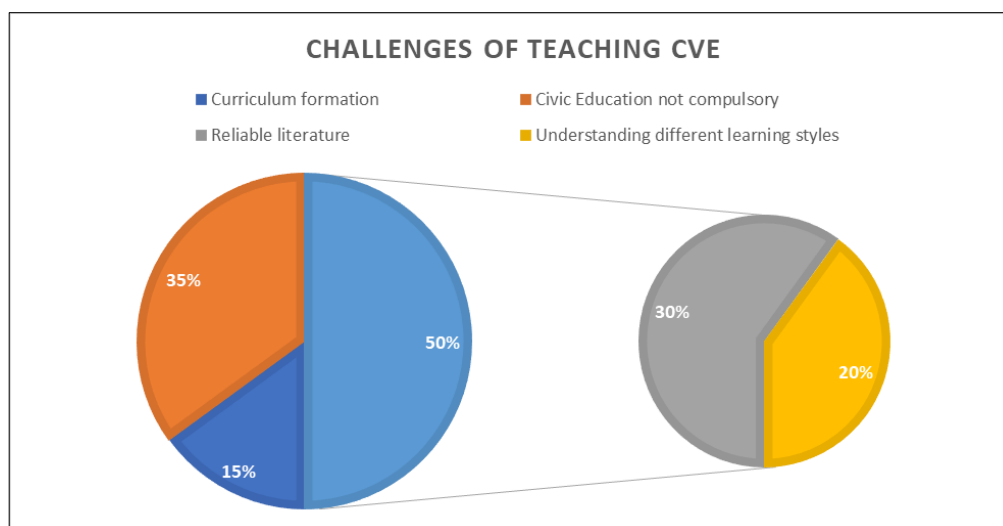
Source: Author, 2023

Figure 2 Challenges Faced in the Teaching/Learning of CVE

15% representing head teachers lamented on the curriculum formation for civic education as the foundation of all other challenges. The vision of the national education curriculum antithesis worrisome. They noted that those in the field of education are literary left out in the whole process, making it difficult for teachers and education administrators to share their views. Even when it is developed and implemented, the resources are not available to meet the stated objectives. Their arguments were: any changes to the curriculum and syllabus must be done in consultation with teachers. The involvement of teachers in such reforms will also give a platform for educators to bring out challenges they face during

policy implementation. Teachers will also advise which among the topics needs review either through adding in some missing content or removing irrelevant content to the subject.

35% representing teachers of civic education also noted that civic education subject is still not being taught as a compulsory subject in almost all secondary schools. This poses a challenge because majority of the community is still ignorant about most etiquettes for resolving conflict in their communities. They argued that what is happening in other schools where those who are doing vocational programmes makes the teaching of Civic Education option is not right. Thus, we still have problems arising from lack of Civic Education such as, immorality of citizens in the country, because some graduates hardly have Civic Education knowledge" they added that all the schools in Zambia should teach civic education at the senior secondary school level regardless of the affiliation of that school. The subject should be given the same status with other important courses as Mathematics, English and Science. This is because the very individuals who say they want to concentrate on natural sciences course will one day aspire to take up leadership roles and also, they will need to know of their rights and duties. This knowledge is what makes up of Civic Education effective.

30% representing pupils of civic education pointed out that challenges of teaching and learning materials. The books written by MK publishing company are shallow and at times are misleading. Nonetheless, these are materials that have flooded the market scene. Also, there is no literature on the teaching of Civic Education as a remedy to conflict resolution in the community. They stated that they don't have literature trickling down from tertiary to secondary school level considered in order to curb such hindrances. Lastly but not the least, 20% representing community members stated understanding different learning styles in civic education as another challenge to effective teaching and learning of civic education. They stated that many conflicts in the classroom can start because of misunderstanding and miscommunication between the subjects.

4. Conclusion

This study was set to investigate into Civic Education and how it serves as a tool for conflict resolution in the community at the selected secondary schools in Kitwe district of Copperbelt province in Zambia. The study demonstrated that Civic Education provide awareness to citizens on the fundamental rights and freedoms; empower citizens for effective participation in decision making, produce critical thinkers, impart learners will conflict resolution skills and helps in appreciation of cultural diversity. Such knowledge and skills provide in the teaching of Civic Education have a potential to transform a violent community to a peaceful community. Civic knowledge, skills and values obtained by learners Civic Education are key to conflict resolution in the community. Additionally, the study concludes that conflict management plays a very important role in preventing conflicts among individuals. A conflict starts when individuals think on different lines and find it very difficult to accept each other's ideas. Conflict must be avoided as it destroys the peace, lowers the productivity as well as demotivates the individuals.

Recommendations

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study

- School administrators should continuously organize Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities and workshops to assist teachers of civic education stay focused and updated in their teaching styles.
- The government should come up with a clear policy that will empower young people through the teaching of Civic Education to organize school associations aimed at promoting peaceful core-existence in multicultural communities.
- NGOs and Civil society organizations must come on board and support the learning of civic education in secondary schools to enhance its role in resolving different conflicts in society.

Compliance with ethical standards

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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Author's short biography

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